United Nations A/66/78–E/2011/13

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
9 May 2011

Original: English

General Assembly
Sixty-sixth session
Item 62 of the preliminary list*
Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 2011
Item 11 of the provisional agenda**
Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

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Note by the Secretary-General

In its resolution 2010/31, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, through the Council, a report on the implementation of that resolution. The Assembly, in its resolution 65/179, also requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to it at its sixty-sixth session. The present report, which has been prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, is submitted in response to the resolutions of the Assembly and the Council.

* A/66/50.
** E/2011/100.

11-32807 (E) 180511

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Report prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan*

Summary

The occupation of Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, by Israel continues to constrain the existence and successful functioning of institutions of the Palestinian Authority and contribute to the economic and social hardship of Palestinians. This includes the Israeli army's continued resort to arbitrary detention, disproportionate use of force, settlement expansion, property destruction, home demolitions, mobility restrictions, restriction of building permits and closure policies.

Between 1 February 2010 and 29 March 2011, 98 Palestinians were killed and 1,871 were injured by Israeli security forces and settlers. During the same period, 5 Israeli fatalities and 82 injuries were recorded as a result of the conflict.

By the end of 2010, an estimated 6,000 Palestinians were detained in Israeli prisons, including 213 Palestinian children and 210 administrative detainees who are held without charge or trial.

In 2010, more demolitions were recorded than in any other year since 2005. At least 431 Palestinian structures were demolished in occupied East Jerusalem and Area C in the West Bank, including 137 residential structures, displacing 594 people and affecting 14,136 others.

The Government of Israel announced its decision to ease the blockade on the Gaza Strip on 20 June 2010. This decision resulted in an increase in imports of consumer goods. Yet, most of the fundamental parameters of Israel's blockade, namely restrictions on the movement of people, the import of only those raw materials and basic construction materials that are used in projects under international supervision and the export of only limited categories of products, remain in place. In the West Bank, Palestinian access to occupied East Jerusalem and their land, mainly located in the Jordan Valley, in areas behind the Wall and in areas in the vicinity of Israeli settlements, remain difficult.

* The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia would like to acknowledge its appreciation for the substantive contributions of the Department for Political Affairs, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the International Labour Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme, the World Health Organization and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

As at mid-2010, 517,774 Israeli settlers lived in 144 settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including about 200,000 settlers in occupied East Jerusalem. This population has more than doubled since the beginning of the Oslo Peace Process in 1992.

Occupation and the tightly closed crossing into the Syrian Arab Republic constitute the most important barriers to economic development and the normalization of the social fabric in the occupied Syrian Golan. Syrian citizens who wish to maintain their Syrian Arab identity face hardship and severely restricted prospects with regard to income generation.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2010/31, the Economic and Social Council called for the full opening of the border crossings of the Gaza Strip, in line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), to ensure humanitarian access as well as the sustained and regular flow of persons and goods and the lifting of all movement restrictions imposed on the Palestinian people. The Council also called upon all parties to respect the rules of international humanitarian law and to refrain from violence against the civilian population. It further called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to cease its destruction of homes and properties, economic institutions and agricultural lands and orchards in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, as well as in the occupied Syrian Golan. The Council reaffirmed that Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, were illegal and constituted a major obstacle to economic and social development. It also reaffirmed that the ongoing construction of the wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, was contrary to international law and was isolating East Jerusalem, fragmenting the West Bank and seriously debilitating the economic and social development of the Palestinian people.

2. In its resolution 65/179, the General Assembly reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people and the population of the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources, including land and water, and demanded that Israel cease the exploitation, damage, cause of loss or depletion of, and endangerment of natural resources. The Assembly stressed that the wall and settlements being constructed in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem, were contrary to international law and were seriously depriving the Palestinian people of access to their natural resources. The Assembly called upon Israel, the occupying Power, to comply strictly with its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law with respect to the alteration of the character and status of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. The Assembly also called upon Israel to cease all actions harming the environment and its destruction of vital infrastructure.

II. Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem

Deaths and injuries

3. Between 1 February 2010 and 29 March 2011, 98 Palestinians were killed and 1,871 were injured by Israeli security forces and settlers. The majority of the deaths were recorded in the Gaza Strip, largely as a result of Israeli air strikes and shootings in restricted areas in the vicinity of the buffer zone near the fence separating the Strip from Israel. Most of the injuries, which increased by 60 per cent in 2010 compared with the previous year,[1] occurred in the West Bank and resulted

[1] Information contributed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat.

from clashes between Israeli forces and Palestinian demonstrators, particularly in occupied East Jerusalem.[2]

4. Eleven children were killed and 360 were injured as a result of the clashes. In September and October 2010 alone, 26 Palestinian children were injured and one 15-month-old baby died after inhaling tear gas in occupied East Jerusalem; most cases involved private armed guards hired by the Ministry of Construction and Housing of Israel to protect Israeli settlers in the neighbourhood of Silwan.[3]

5. Three separate cases of Palestinian children being used by Israeli security forces as human shields were documented in the West Bank in 2010 compared with seven such cases during Operation Cast Lead in Gaza.[3]

6. During the same period, 5 Israeli fatalities and 82 injuries were recorded as a result of the conflict.[2]

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

7. Citing security concerns, during 2010 Israeli forces conducted over 4,200 search and arrest operations throughout the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, arresting around 2,940 Palestinians.[4] Since the occupation of the Palestinian territory in 1967, Israeli authorities have detained an estimated 760,000 Palestinians for various periods, including 13,000 women and 15,000 children. At the end of 2010, an estimated 6,000 Palestinians were being detained in Israeli prisons, including 210 administrative detainees held without charge or trial.[4] Since 25 June 2006, the Gaza-based Palestinian armed faction has held one Israeli soldier.

8. In the same period, 213 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 were reported to be detained in Israeli prisons.[5] According to Israeli police figures, 1,267 criminal files were opened against children accused of throwing stones in occupied East Jerusalem between October 2009 and October 2010. Ninety cases of torture and ill treatment of detained children were documented in 2010, in 24 of which the children were under the age of 15, compared with 101 such cases in 2009. In addition, 13 cases of threatened and 1 case of actual sexual violence against detained children aged between 13 and 17 were reported in 2010, compared with nine such cases in 2009.[3]

9. Between January 2010 and the end of 2010, 645 complaints were filed against Israeli security agency interrogators for alleged ill treatment and torture of Palestinian detainees. The Israeli Police Investigation Department of the Ministry of Justice, which is the relevant authority charged with investigating these complaints, did not conduct any criminal investigation.[3]

[2] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Protection of Civilians: Casualties Database. Available from www.ochaopt.org/poc.aspx?id=1010002.

[3] United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and others, "Children Affected by Armed Conflict: Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (2010 Annual Review)". Available from www.unicef.org/oPt/CAAC_2010_annual_bulletin.pdf.

[4] Information contributed by the Palestinian Authority.

[5] Defence of Children International-Palestine Section, "In their own words: a report on the situation facing Palestinian children detained in the Israeli military court system" (January 2011). Available from www.dci-pal.org/English/Doc/Press/JANUARY2011.pdf.

Population displacement, property destruction and confiscation

10. Master plans for Palestinian communities in Area C of the West Bank, which is under Israeli jurisdiction, are either non-existent or have been prepared by the Israeli Civil Administration without the participation of and without consulting with local Palestinian communities.[6] As a consequence, housing and infrastructure needs remain largely unmet, resulting in overdensification and displacement to Areas A and B, which are administratively controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

11. Palestinian land and structures continue to be at risk of confiscation for Israeli purposes, such as the construction of the wall and the roads serving Israeli settlements.[7] In addition to the displacement resulting from home demolitions, the destruction of Palestinian livelihood-related structures often have a devastating impact on the socio-economic status of affected families.[8]

12. The incidence of demolitions rose in 2010, up 59 per cent from 2009, a rate higher than in any year since 2005. At least 431 Palestinian structures were demolished in occupied East Jerusalem and Area C[9] in the West Bank, including 137 residential structures, displacing 594 people and affecting the livelihood of 14,136 others.[10] At least 20,194 Palestinians have been left homeless as a result of home demolitions since 2004.[11]

13. On 8 December 2010, Israeli military forces demolished 29 structures in the village of Khirbet Tana, including homes and the town school. It was the third wave of demolitions endured by the community in just over five years. One week later, the Israeli authorities issued eviction orders targeting most of the remaining structures in the village.[10]

14. Israeli policies, which the facts on the ground have shown to be aimed at the annexation of East Jerusalem, include home demolitions, the revocation of residency permits, undermining constructions by and confiscating the land of

[6] Bimkom, *The Prohibited Zone* (2008), available from http://eng.bimkom.org/_Uploads/23ProhibitedZone.pdf); World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza: The Economic Effects of Restricted Access to Land in the West Bank* (2008), available from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/EconomicEffectsofRestrictedAccesstoLandintheWestBankOct.20,08.pdf.

[7] According to the World Bank, in the period 2000-2007 33 per cent of demolition orders were issued against Palestinian structures and only 91 building permits were issued to Palestinians, while 7 per cent of demolition orders were issued against Israeli structures and 18,472 building permits were issued to Israelis (see footnote 6).

[8] Information contributed by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

[9] Area C, which constitutes the vast majority of the West Bank, is under full control of the Israeli military, even with regard to civilian affairs.

[10] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor* (December 2010), available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2011_01_19_english.pdf.

[11] See www.btselem.org. Data on house demolitions as a punitive measure are available until 2004; data on house demolitions for alleged military purposes are available for the period 2004-2010 (and exclude Operation Cast Lead); and data on the demolition of houses built without a permit in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are available only for the periods 2006-2010 and 2004-2010, respectively.

Palestinians, have resulted in the expropriation of 23,378 dunams[12] of land in occupied East Jerusalem since 1968.[13]

15. Only 13 per cent of occupied East Jerusalem is zoned by the Israeli authorities for Palestinian construction. However, most of this area is already heavily built-up. Moreover, Israel's policy for granting building permits to Palestinians is restrictive and involves a process that is often complicated and expensive.[1]

16. As a result, the number of building permits granted annually does not meet the existing demand for housing. The gap between housing needs based on population growth and legally permitted construction is estimated to be of at least 1,100 housing units per year. Thus, 28 per cent of all Palestinian homes in occupied East Jerusalem have been built without permits, a situation that could be used, at any time, as a pretext by the Israeli authorities to demolish the homes, potentially rendering 60,000 Palestinians homeless.[14] Since 1967, the Israeli authorities have demolished thousands of Palestinian-owned structures in East Jerusalem, including an estimated 2,000 homes.[15] Consequently, housing is becoming increasingly unaffordable, overdensification is becoming a problem and some families have no choice but to move out of occupied East Jerusalem.

17. In the first half of 2010, 46 residency permits for Palestinians in Jerusalem were revoked, adding to the 13,115 permits that had been revoked between 1967 and November 2009.[16]

18. During 2010, Israeli authorities confiscated about 8,407.5 dunams of land and razed another 1,532 dunams for the purpose of constructing the West Bank wall and for expanding settlements.[4]

19. In the Gaza Strip, the blockade continues to impede the construction, reconstruction and restoration of Palestinian homes. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that 26,500 new housing units are needed to accommodate the natural growth that occurred between June 2007 and December 2010. Additional units are needed to replace the 6,300 units that were destroyed or severely damaged during Operation Cast Lead and the 2,900 units that were destroyed or damaged in previous military operations; 5,500 additional units are needed to replace substandard and unsanitary homes in refugee camps. The (conservative) total estimate is 41,200 housing units needed.[17]

[12] 1 dunam = 1,000 m^2.

[13] See www.btselem.org/english/Jerusalem/Land_Expropriation_Statistics.asp.

[14] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "West Bank Movement and Access Update" (June 2010), available from http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/4694C27BF64041468525774400 4ACE17.

[15] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "East Jerusalem: Key Humanitarian Concerns" (March 2011), available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_jerusalem_report_2011_03_23_web_english.pdf.

[16] See www.btselem.org/english/Jerusalem/Revocation_Statistics.asp.

[17] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *Easing the Blockade* (March 2011), available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_special_easing_the_blockade_2011_03_english.pdf.

Israeli settlements and settler violence

20. As at mid-2010, more than half a million Israeli settlers were estimated to be living in 144 settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including around 200,000 settlers in occupied East Jerusalem.[4] This population has more than doubled since the beginning of the Oslo Peace Process in 1992.

21. The Israeli settler population in the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem, increased by 68 per cent between 1997 and 2010 (equal to a growth rate of about 4 per cent a year, which is more than double the overall natural demographic growth of Israel during the same period), while the Palestinian population in the area increased by 41 per cent during the same period, as shown in table 1.

Table 1
Growth in the Israeli settler and Palestinian populations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem

Year	*1992*	*1997*	*2002*	*2007*	*2010*
Israeli settlers	241 500	308 689	383 275	461 169	517 774
Palestinians		1 787 562	2 042 306	2 323 469	2 513 283

Sources: www.btselem.org/English/Settlements/Settlement_population.xls; *Human Rights Watch, Separate and Unequal: Israel's Discriminatory Treatment of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories* (December 2010); information contributed by the Palestinian Authority's Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (see www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/populati/GOVER1997-2010E.htm).

22. In addition to settlements, there are currently about 100 settlement outposts in the West Bank that were built without official Israeli authorization and have therefore been deemed illegal by the Government of Israel, but that are often tolerated by governmental ministries and protected by the Israeli army. As with the settlements, the outposts are illegal under international humanitarian law.[18] The outposts control some 16,000 dunams of land, of which 7,000 consist of private, Palestinian-owned land (see A/65/365, para. 15).

23. A 10-month partial moratorium on settlement construction in the West Bank ended on 26 September 2010. Construction continued during the 10 months on units authorized and commenced before the partial restraint. In addition, the Israeli non-governmental organization Peace Now has reported a number of violations of the partial restraint (see A/HRC/16/72, para. 14).

24. In the six weeks following the end of the moratorium, the rate of settlement construction increased compared to what it had been before the moratorium (see A/HRC/16/72, para. 14). In fact, the number of housing units built in settlements was about four times higher in 2010 (6,764) than in 2009 (1,703); 2,107 units were constructed in 2008, 1,471 in 2007 and 1,518 in 2006.[19]

[18] A 2005 report (the Sasson Report) commissioned by the then Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon, concluded that the outposts were illegal even under Israeli law.

[19] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the occasion of Land Day, available from www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/land_day_E30032011.pdf.

25. Israel has drawn plans to construct a new settlement between Ma'ale Adumim and East Jerusalem, the implementation of which would connect the two areas and cut off East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. Israel already built the new Police District Headquarters in this area some years ago, in the course of which it paved roads and built infrastructure to serve the planned settlement, thereby splitting the West Bank in two (see A/65/365, para. 23).

26. Israeli settlements are linked to each other and to Israel by an extensive road network. Palestinians are either prevented from using these roads or have only restricted access to them. As a result, the roads have fragmented the West Bank into isolated enclaves that Palestinians must access via alternative roads, checkpoints, bridges and tunnels that circumvent the roads reserved for settlers.

27. In December 2009, the High Court of Justice of Israel cancelled the ban on the movement of Palestinians along that section of route 443 to and from Jerusalem that lies beyond the Green Line. In response, the Israeli army proposed new traffic arrangements resulting in the continued exclusion of Palestinians from utilizing the route, in contravention of the High Court's rulings.[20]

28. Israeli settlements, their infrastructure and the territory zoned for their expansion, have been identified as the single largest factor shaping the system of access restrictions applied to the Palestinian population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. While in some cases the restricted areas have been unilaterally established and enforced by Israeli settlers, in other cases the Israeli military erects fences around settlements and declares the area behind the fence a special security area (see A/65/365, para. 16).

29. In 2010, settler attacks more than doubled compared with 2009. Between February 2010 and February 2011, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded a total of 304 settler-related incidents, of which 101 were perpetrated by settlers against Palestinians and their properties. In 2010, a Palestinian boy was killed by settlers. Moreover, settlers took over at least 10 Palestinian housing units in occupied East Jerusalem, leading to the eviction of at least 70 Palestinians.[1]

30. Israeli settlers burned down a Palestinian church in occupied East Jerusalem and three mosques in the West Bank. Six mosques were vandalized, set on fire or both by Israeli settlers during 2010, the fifth such occurrence that year.[21]

31. During the 2010 olive harvest season, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recorded more than 30 incidents resulting either in injury to Palestinians or in damage to olive trees, compared with 20 incidents in each of the 2008 and 2009 olive harvest seasons. In addition, Israeli settlers caused dozens of other incidents, including intimidation, trespassing and preventing access. These attacks resulted in 17 injuries to Palestinians and the destruction of roughly 4,000 olive trees.[1]

[20] See www.btselem.org/english/freedom_of_movement/road_443.asp.

[21] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, The Humanitarian Monitor (October 2010), available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2010_11_12_english.pdf.

32. In one incident, 3,000 dunams of cultivated land were set on fire by Israeli settlers in August 2010, thus undermining the livelihoods of some 100 Palestinian families from the Beit Furik village (Nablus).[22]

33. No indictment was filed after 97 investigations were launched by Israeli security forces into the vandalization of Palestinian trees between 2005 and 2010.[23] On 27 March, a settler was sentenced to one and a half years in prison and had to pay compensation after a Jerusalem court convicted him for kidnapping a Palestinian minor in 2007.

The wall

34. Israel continues to construct the wall initiated in 2002, with approximately 85 per cent of its planned route running within the West Bank, including occupied East Jerusalem. Should the wall be completed as planned, approximately 33,000 Palestinians in the West Bank, as well as the majority of Palestinian residents of occupied East Jerusalem, will reside between the wall and the Green Line.[1]

35. By the end of 2010, approximately 61.4 per cent of the 707-kilometre-long wall had been completed. A further 8.4 per cent was under construction and 30.1 per cent was planned but had not yet been constructed.[1]

36. The wall has already severely affected social and economic life; it restricts the freedom of access and movement of Palestinians in the West Bank, affecting around 855,000 Palestinians in 206 communities. The impact of the wall will continue to increase as construction progresses.[4]

37. The wall separates occupied East Jerusalem from the remainder of the West Bank. Only holders of West Bank identification documents with valid permits can access occupied East Jerusalem, through 3 of 14 checkpoints, in order to reach their jobs or health-care facilities.[4] Around 50,000 holders of Jerusalem identification documents live within the municipal boundaries but have been left on the West Bank side of the wall. Moreover, 140,000 people living in the Jerusalem governorate in communities historically connected to Jerusalem are now physically separated by the wall.[14]

38. The area between the wall and the Green Line has been designated a "closed military area" that is also referred to as the "Seam Zone". It covers almost 733 km^2, which represents about 13 per cent of the area of the West Bank. These isolated and confiscated areas include 348 km^2 of agricultural land, 110 km^2 of land utilized for Israeli settlements and military bases, 250 km^2 of forests and open areas and 25 km^2 of land that has been built up by Palestinians.[19] Approximately 7,800 Palestinians currently reside in this closed area. Furthermore, Palestinians are obliged to obtain "visitor" permits to access their farming land and water resources that are located in the Seam Zone. Access is channelled via specific gates erected in the wall.[1] Restricted allocation of these permits and the limited number and opening times of

[22] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor* (August 2010), available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2010_09_16_english.pdf.

[23] Yesh Din, "Police investigation of vandalization of Palestinian trees in the West Bank" (October 2010). Available from www.yesh-din.org/userfiles/file/datasheets/YESH%20DIN_Eng.pdf.

the wall gates have severely curtailed agricultural practice and undermined rural livelihoods.[7]

39. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has reported that its access to the Seam Zone — for the provision of mobile health services, food assistance and mental health services, as well as for social work teams — remains difficult due to Israeli demands that vehicles and staff be searched. Israeli authorities continue to require that UNRWA goods be transferred "back-to-back" at one of the five commercial crossings along the wall.[8]

Mobility restrictions and closure policies, including access to humanitarian assistance

40. Israel's adoption, citing security concerns, of a closed regime with regard to the Occupied Palestinian Territory makes it complicated for Palestinian households to conduct normal lives (to reach school, health-care facilities, the local market, the workplace and agricultural land). Restricting movement in the occupied territory is in contradiction with the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949,[24] (Fourth Geneva Convention) and creates a shattered socio-economic space where, on any given day, the ability of an ordinary Palestinian household to conduct a normal life is continuously subject to non-transparent decisions and delays. Such a system of movement restrictions induces people to live under a continuous sense of uncertainty and vulnerability.

41. Israel continued to control the export and import of Palestinian goods. The Occupied Palestinian Territory has no seaport, airport or railway, and suffers from constraints to road transportation, as a result of which its trade has been concentrated with and through Israel.

Restrictions on access to and from the Gaza Strip

42. The blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip since June 2007 remained in effect, constituting a clear, systematic and sustained case of collective punishment imposed on an entire civilian population in direct violation of article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention (see A/HRC/16/72, para. 23).

43. It remains difficult for Gaza's population to move in and out of the Strip, with exceptional access granted in humanitarian cases. This means that a limited number of people requiring urgent medical care and those accompanying them, with permits, can enter Israel.[7] Moreover, national staff of humanitarian organizations were less able to travel in and out of Gaza after June 2010, when only half as many applications for such staff to access Gaza were approved.[25]

44. Until June 2010, limited quantities of only 76 items were allowed compared with the approximately 4,000 items that were traded before the blockade.[10] In June 2010, Israel announced an easing of the blockade, moving from a positive to a

[24] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 75, No. 973.

[25] See http://ochadms.unog.ch/quickplace/cap/main.nsf/h_Index/CAP_2011_Humanitarian_Appeal/$FILE/CAP_2011_Humanitarian_Appeal_SCREEN.pdf?openElement.

negative list of goods that resulted in a slight increase in the importation of consumer goods and a corresponding decline in the illegal trade in such items through tunnels. Yet, the fundamental restrictions on the movement of people and on the importation of raw materials and basic construction materials, as well as the ban on the export of goods beyond a limited selection of agricultural products, remained, in spite of limited progress in the entry of construction materials.[26] It should be noted that, according to an announcement made by Israel on 8 December 2010, permissible exports are to include agricultural produce, furniture and textile products, which will be subject to security and logistical preparations at the Kerem Shalom crossing.[27]

45. These incremental improvements can easily be withdrawn or amended and, as such, are unlikely to give people the certainty they need to carry out their ordinary businesses. Currently, approval procedures remain burdensome and limited capacity at crossing points delays the flow of essential goods and the implementation of international projects under the recovery and reconstruction plan for Gaza. To date, United Nations projects valued at $155.5 million have been approved by the Government of Israel. It is now important to ensure timely implementation of these projects and a steady flow of approvals. For instance, the arbitrary closure of the Nahal Oz crossing at the beginning of 2010 negatively affected the importation of cooking gas, just as capacity limitations at Karni and Kerem Shalom crossings have failed to accommodate the need for construction supplies.[1]

46. Between January 2010 and February 2011, 3,407 truckloads of goods entered the Gaza Strip.[27] While this figure marks an increase from 2009, it remains well below the monthly average of 12,350 truckloads in the months preceding the imposition of the blockade in 2007.[10] Despite an overall increase in the volume of non-food items, including new raw materials, food items continue to make up the majority, or 58 per cent, of imported goods; the share of food items prior to June 2007 was of about 20 per cent.[17] At the time of writing this report, the announcement by Israeli authorities of an easing of export restrictions, which was made in December 2010, remains mostly unimplemented.[1] In fact, 99 truckloads of goods were exported in December 2010, 107 in January 2011 and 52 in February 2011, compared to 4 in November 2010 and zero in the preceding six months. Exports in December 2010 and February 2011 were all agricultural.[27]

47. The importation of basic construction materials remains heavily restricted. Materials that are designated by Israel as "dual-use" items are restricted for projects approved by the Palestinian Authority and supervised by international organizations,[1] thereby imposing delays and extra costs on project implementation. The unilateral designation of construction materials as "dual-use items for projects" undermines recovery and reconstruction efforts and renders inconsequential the commitment by international donors to alleviate the plight of the civilian population.

48. In addition, a very cumbersome coordination and monitoring system needs to be adhered to, often resulting in the interruption of imports and projects. The unmet need for 41,200 housing units,[17] (including as a result of natural growth) is causing

[26] Information contributed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process.

[27] Information contributed by the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process.

an increasingly severe housing crisis, with a negative impact on the housing stock, hygiene and the social stability of families.

49. While the Israeli authorities continue to make efforts to expand the capacity of Kerem Shalom crossing, the fact that the conveyor belt at Karni Crossing currently operates only twice weekly, to transfer grain and gravel, has been a significant constraint in the implementation of construction projects authorized by the Israeli authorities,[28] as well as in the maintenance of adequate reserves of wheat.[1] During the first half of March 2011, the conveyor belt was closed.

50. Since late 2008, Palestinians have been totally or partially prevented from accessing land located between 1,000 and 1,500 metres from the Green Line and sea areas beyond 3 nautical miles from shore. At sea, fishermen are prevented from accessing their exclusive economic zone. It should be noted that in all Member States exclusive economic zones are designated at 200 nautical miles, as stipulated by article 57 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.[29] Overall, it is estimated that 17 per cent of the total land mass of the Gaza Strip and 35 per cent of its agricultural land is restricted. An estimated 178,000 people (12 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip) are directly affected by the access regime implemented by the Israeli military. This includes approximately 113,000 people affected by restrictions on access to land and 65,000 people affected by restrictions on access to maritime areas.[30]

Movement of persons and goods in the West Bank

51. While movement between urban centres throughout the West Bank, excluding occupied East Jerusalem, has marginally improved, Palestinian access to their land located in the Jordan Valley, in areas behind the wall and in areas in the vicinity of Israeli settlements, continues to be difficult.[1] Crossing procedures at gates that provide access to East Jerusalem or to other parts of the West Bank through Area C are managed arbitrarily by Israeli authorities. Crossing permits are normally only valid at certain gates and alternative passages are not allowed.

52. The mobility of Palestinians throughout the West Bank continues to be controlled through Israeli military checkpoints and obstacles to movement. As at 4 January 2011, there were over 500 obstacles in the West Bank — compared to the 571 that were in place at the end of 2009 and the average of 518 that existed in 2006 — including approximately 64 permanently staffed checkpoints, some 24 partially staffed checkpoints and over 420 unstaffed obstacles (roadblocks, earth mounds, earth walls, road barriers, road gates and trenches). These obstacles to movement were augmented by ad hoc or "flying" checkpoints; throughout 2010, an average of 92 such checkpoints was erected each week.[1] There was no improvement in East Jerusalem and Area C. Israel granted tourist access to Bethlehem and more

[28] Once approved, a strict monitoring and verification procedure is implemented by the Israeli authorities for each imported truckload used in the project. This procedure has resulted in a significant increase in administrative and operational costs and has slowed down project implementation.

[29] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1833, No. 31363.

[30] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the World Food Programme, "Between the Fence and a Hard Place: the Humanitarian Impact of Israeli-imposed Restrictions on Access to Land and Sea in the Gaza Strip" (August 2010). Available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_special_focus_2010_08_19_english.pdf.

predictable access for meat and dairy products into East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank.

53. Palestinians are prohibited from crossing checkpoints to the Jordan River areas of the West Bank (an area with very high potential in terms of agriculture, trade logistics, and religious and health-related tourism) with their private vehicles, unless they have obtained a special permit that is usually difficult to secure.[14]

54. During 2010, UNRWA faced continued restrictions in accessing refugee communities in the West Bank, with major implications on its ability to meet the humanitarian needs of Palestinian refugees. A total of 339 access-related incidents were reported in 2010, resulting in a loss to UNRWA of an estimated 293 workdays or 2,200 work-hours. Those affected included teachers, medical doctors and nurses, social workers and field office staff. The incidents negatively affected the delivery of education and health services and relief operations. The overwhelming majority of the incidents (337) were due to Israeli restrictions.[8]

Exploitation, endangerment and depletion of Palestinian natural resources and the environment

55. The expansion of Israeli settlements, the wall and the Israeli military operations have severely restricted the ability of Palestinians to access their natural resources, namely water, land and energy, as well as adversely affected the environment, for example through the depletion of water resources and the deterioration of the quality of those resources. The land has been degraded and both the land and the air have been polluted. This will have long-term ecological and health effects, further undermining the development and welfare of the Palestinian population.

56. Palestinians have very limited access to surface water resources such as the Jordan River. Israel extracts 80 per cent of the estimated potential of the aquifers under the West Bank. In addition, Israel overdraws more than half of the potential by means of deep wells without any regular consultation mechanism with the Palestine Authority; this has led to a drop in water tables and in the drying up of half of Palestinians' wells over the last two decades. Current Israeli restrictions mean that over the past decade Palestinians have had access to between 113 million and 138 million m^3 of water compared with the approximately 75 million m^3 supplied to the settler population. In 2007, West Bank Palestinians had access to 123 litres per capita per day while Israelis had access to 544 litres per capita per day.[11]

57. Palestinians have extremely limited access to domestic fresh water, averaging 73 litres per capita per day in the West Bank (in parts of Hebron, the average is as low as 10 litres per person per day) and 52 in the Gaza Strip. This is well below the World Health Organization's recommendation of 100 litres per day.[4] Moreover, it is estimated that 313,000 people in the West Bank are not connected to a water network and therefore pay between 4 and 5 times as much for water than those who

[11] World Bank, *West Bank and Gaza: Assessment of Restrictions on Palestinian Water Sector Development* (2009) (http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/WaterRestrictionsReport18Apr2009.pdf).

are connected to the network.[32] Those not connected to the water network rely mainly on water cisterns to collect rainwater or tanker water whose quality can vary. Those purchasing tanker water in the West Bank pay on average five times more per cubic metre than those getting water from the network (19.4 versus 3.8 new sheqalim per cubic metre).[33] The poor in the Gaza Strip end up paying up to 10 times the standard household expenditure benchmark set by UNICEF and the World Health Organization.[32]

58. In Gaza, the ban on importing spare parts and construction material has led to the deterioration of the water quality and a decrease in its quantity. Approximately 85 per cent of water in wells in the Gaza Strip is not suitable for drinking because of increasing levels of alkalinity and a heightened concentration of salts and nitrates.[4,34] According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics the water in the Gaza Strip suffers from a high percentage of salinity since the costal aquifer had a concentration of 1,000 mg of chloride per litre compared with the 300 mg per litre recommended by international standards.[33]

59. As a result of limited capacity and the continual breakdown of sanitation facilities in Gaza, which serve only two thirds of the population, approximately 60 million litres of untreated or partly treated sewage are reaching agricultural lands, the sea and sources of drinking water on a daily basis.[25,35]

60. Most of the wastewater produced in the West Bank (40-50 million m^3 per year) is dumped into the environment as untreated sewage, polluting agricultural lands and underground aquifers.[25] Approximately 40 million m^3 of wastewater and solid waste produced by Israeli settlements are estimated to be dumped on Palestinian land annually.[4]

61. These Israeli practices are resulting in land degradation and a loss of agricultural productivity. The wall in the West Bank was constructed on approximately 19,000 dunams of agricultural land,[4] isolating about 170,000 dunams of fertile land with an estimated economic value of $38 million, thereby depriving Palestinian farmers of the right to use this resource for their livelihood.

62. Palestinians continue to face difficulties in accessing energy supplies because of the instability of the electric power supply controlled by Israel and the severe restrictions placed on supplies of bottled gas. Despite the fact that natural gas fields suitable for commercial production were discovered on Gaza's shores, the development of those fields was halted owing to the failure of negotiations with Israel and other concerned stakeholders.[36]

[32] UNICEF/Palestinian Hydrology Group, *Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Household Survey: Gaza (2010)*, available from www.ewash.org/files/library/FINAL_WASH_REPORT.pdf.

[33] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the occasion of World Water Day (22 March 2011), available from www.pcbs.gov.ps/DesktopModules/Articles/ArticlesView.aspx?tabID=0&lang=en&ItemID=1664&mid=12235.

[34] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, press release on the occasion of World Environment Day, available from www.pcbs.gov.ps/Portals/_pcbs/PressRelease/Envirm-DayE.pdf.

[35] United Nations Environment Programme, *Environmental Assessment of the Gaza Strip* (2009), available from http://oneresponse.info/crosscutting/environment/publicdocuments/UNEP_Gaza_EA.pdf.

[36] Palestine Monetary Authority and others, *Quarterly Economic and Social Monitor*, vol. 22 (November 2010).

Socio-economic indicators

63. The Palestinian economy has been heavily affected by Israeli occupation since 1967 and continuously suffers from very limited access to sources of growth and welfare such as land, natural resources, tourist and cultural sites, telecommunications frequencies and uninterrupted access to both domestic and international markets. After the September 2000 crisis, the occupying power imposed additional restrictive policies. As a result, the Palestinian economy has been characterized by volatile trends over the last 10 years. Indeed, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates that the per capita gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 was 30 per cent less than it was in 2000 (see TD/B/57/4). Recently, the GDP growth rates have been relatively high, as the Palestinian economy recovers from the depletion of its capital stock and a slowdown in economic activity. This can be seen in the Gaza Strip's real GDP growth rate of 15 per cent in the first quarter of 2010 relative to the corresponding period in 2009, a figure higher than that for the West Bank (10 per cent).[37]

64. The occupation regime confined Palestinian-controlled cities and towns with tight temporary borders. As a consequence, urban growth has been heavily constrained, inflating land prices, making housing increasingly unaffordable for Palestinian families and negatively affecting the overall economic status.[38]

65. The collapse of the Palestinian economy and its subsequent recovery can be seen in significant changes in both labour force participation and employment trends. While the rate of labour force participation was already low by international standards in the year 2000 (43.5 per cent in the third quarter of that year), its subsequent decline in the face of policies pursued by the Israeli authorities never fully reversed, not even a decade later (the rate of labour participation was 40.5 per cent for the whole territory but only 36 per cent in Gaza in the third quarter of 2010).[39] Despite very high levels of human capital across the territory relative to the rest of the region and beyond, trends in employment, underemployment and unemployment rates, together with overall decreasing real wages, highlight not just the precarious employment situation in Palestine since the September 2000 crisis but also the existence of an economy that is increasingly bifurcated between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as indicated in table 2.[39] The overall unemployment rate has more than doubled since 2000.

[37] World Bank, *The Underpinnings of the Future Palestinian State: Sustainable Growth and Institutions* (2010). Available from http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWESTBANKGAZA/Resources/WorldBankSep2010AHLCReport.pdf.

[38] Information contributed by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat).

[39] Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, labour force surveys.

Table 2
Employment statistics in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip in the third quarter of 2000 and 2010

(Percentage)

	Full employment		*Underemployment*		*Unemployment*	
	2000	*2010*	*2000*	*2010*	*2000*	*2010*
West Bank	84.8	73.0	7.7	6.9	7.5	20.1
Gaza Strip	81.0	54.1	3.5	5.4	15.5	40.5

66. There are differences in the duration of unemployment depending on location: people in the Gaza Strip are unemployed for an average of 24.1 months while people in the West Bank are unemployed for an average of 7.8 months. The highest rate of unemployment is 70.6 per cent, which relates to youth aged between 15 and 19 years in the Gaza Strip; 33.5 per cent of their peers in the West Bank are unemployed.[39] With a labour force expanding by 3 per cent each year, in part because of a youth bulge that is still growing, only sustained economic growth that includes the tradable goods sector can keep the increasing level of frustration among youths under control.

67. Although labour market access to the Israeli economy is unavailable to those from the Gaza Strip, it remains open, albeit with tight restrictions, to Palestinians residing in the West Bank. In fact, 78,800 West Bank Palestinians were employed in the Israeli economy in the fourth quarter of 2010, forming 13.82 per cent of those employed from the West Bank. This is a slight increase from the corresponding period in 2009, when approximately 72,079 (13.40 per cent) of employed West Bank residents worked in the Israeli economy.[39]

68. The industrial sector in the Gaza Strip is still suffering from the damage caused by Operation Cast Lead and the June 2007 closure. Records show that 1,365 establishments were operational during June and July 2010, compared with 3,900 prior to the closure. Of those establishments, 15 per cent were working at a capacity of between 30 and 60 per cent, a fifth at a capacity of 20 per cent and 65 per cent remained out of commission. There has also been a fall in employment at these establishments, from 35,000 to 6,000 workers. The construction sector was in a similar predicament: 50 working establishments were hiring 1,500 workers in 2010, while prior to the closures 125 establishments were employing 50,000 workers.[37] Nevertheless, the construction sector is witnessing improvements in the West Bank, where 11.8 per cent more building licences were issued in the third quarter of 2010 compared with the corresponding period in 2009.[40]

69. Damage also continues to be done to the agricultural sector. Of the agricultural land in the Gaza Strip, 35 per cent is located in restricted zones; lack of access to that land is estimated to result in the loss of approximately 75,000 tons of potential produce annually, whose market value is conservatively estimated at $50.2 million. In the fishing sector, it is estimated that access restrictions have resulted in the loss

[40] See www.pcbs.gov.ps/desktopDefault.aspx?tabID=3491&lang=en.

of approximately 7,000 tons of potential fishing catch, with a related income loss of some $26.5 million over a period of five years.[41]

70. Movement restrictions dramatically reduce enterprise competitiveness by raising transportation costs and inducing low levels of capacity utilization, which in turn results in high fixed costs. In addition, the very limited working hours at Israeli crossing points, combined with inadequate infrastructure, such as the lack of cold storage facilities and large scanners, and the use of a slow and inefficient back-to-back system at commercial crossings instead of containers, make it impossible for Palestinian enterprises to make cost-effective shipments, thereby preventing them from entering international markets that require rigorous delivery times and limiting their ability to achieve economies of scale.

71. Poverty measurements were recently revised by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics. Overall, poverty rates remain extremely low in occupied East Jerusalem and are declining in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. However, poverty rates in the Gaza Strip are almost twice as high as those in the West Bank. The population remains highly vulnerable to poverty and a significant proportion of households live close to the poverty line. Poverty is more prevalent among households headed by women.

72. By dedicating more than half of their total cash expenditures to food, Palestinian households are particularly sensitive to variations in food prices and income levels. As food prices rise — in part as a result of Israeli restrictions on movement, which inflate the cost of transport — and as income levels decline, Palestinians resort to coping mechanisms that involve deferring the payment of utility bills, purchasing food on credit and consuming lower-quality and smaller quantities of food. Most of these coping strategies, even if they are reversible, can exact a permanent cost on people's lives and livelihoods by leading to poorer health and a poorer nutritional status, excessive indebtedness and the loss of future opportunities for higher qualifications, better skills and better paid jobs.

73. Economic deterioration and increasing vulnerability have made the Occupied Palestinian Territory one of the most aid-dependent economies in the world. The stifling of the Palestinian productive sector substantially reduces the multiplier effects of aid.

Public health and food insecurity

74. Food insecurity remains a pressing issue for 1.43 million Palestinians, although those in the West Bank fare better than those in the Gaza Strip, with 22 per cent of the former experiencing food insecurity compared with 52 per cent of the latter.[41,42]

75. In the Gaza Strip, the blockade, recurrent power cuts and unstable power supply have had a significant impact on medical care. Moreover, shortages of essential medicines and supplies are evident. By the end of January 2011, there were no stocks of 38 per cent of essential drugs in Gaza's central drug store.[17]

[41] Information contributed by the World Food Programme.

[42] The indicators used to define food insecurity in the Occupied Palestinian Territory combined information on income and/or consumption levels (dollars per capita) and trends in food and non-food expenditures (decrease/no change).

76. Refugees are particularly financially vulnerable, and thus increase the burden on the health services provided by UNRWA in the Gaza Strip. Psychosocial health care throughout the Gaza Strip has also suffered due to conflicts and economic isolation. In particular, 56.6 per cent of children have reported a moderate reaction to trauma and 10.6 per cent have reported severe reactions. The prevalence of post-traumatic stress among families is estimated at 45 per cent.[43]

77. Palestinians within the Seam Zone face severe restrictions to health care, having to cross Israeli checkpoints in order to seek basic health services located in Palestinian cities in the West Bank.[44] The health-care system in both the West Bank and occupied East Jerusalem continues to fragment as a result of the occupation and the restrictions placed on the movement of people (not only of patients but also of health staff) and goods.[45] In addition, providers of specialized care are often located in occupied East Jerusalem, requiring residents in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to obtain permits to visit those centres;[46] this, in turn, leads to a substantial drain in already scarce public and household financial resources.

Youth and education

78. Forty incidents in which students were prevented from accessing schools, learning was disrupted or the safety of students was compromised were documented in 2010. Of those cases, 38 per cent involved the closure of roads and checkpoints, searches and the harassment or assault of students at checkpoints by Israeli authorities. In 33 per cent of cases, children missed school hours and were exposed to violence by settlers because the Israeli authorities did not provide military escorts to protect children passing near settlements and outposts prone to violence in the West Bank.[3]

79. The situation in the Gaza Strip is particularly pressing given the rate of population growth, that the average class size is of between 38 and 40 students and that 79 per cent of Ministry of Education schools and 90 per cent of UNRWA schools are running double or triple shifts. In mid-2010 it was estimated that the Ministry of Education needed 160 new schools to alleviate the problem of double or triple shifts.[17]

80. In the West Bank some 10 schools are threatened with demolition due to the lack of permits, another 22 have been declared unsafe or have unhygienic facilities and 5 more face ongoing intimidation by Israeli settlers.[47] In Area C, new schools and repairs cannot be undertaken without running the risk of becoming subject to long and uncertain procedures that may end up in demolition or sealing orders.

[43] UNRWA, *Emergency Appeal 2011* (December 2010). Available from www.unrwa.org/userfiles/2010121464938.pdf.

[44] World Health Organization and Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Impact of the Barrier on Health* (July 2010). Available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_special_focus_july_2010_english.pdf.

[45] Rita Giacaman and others, "Health status and health services in the occupied Palestinian territory", *The Lancet*, vol. 373, No. 9666 (March 2009), pp. 837-849.

[46] Information contributed by the World Health Organization.

[47] Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, *The Humanitarian Monitor* (September 2010). Available from www.ochaopt.org/documents/ocha_opt_the_humanitarian_monitor_2010_10_19_english.pdf).

81. In spite of the limited territory under its control and other constraints, the Palestinian Authority has accelerated progress in improving its government functions. In the areas where the United Nations is engaged the most (governance, rule of law and human rights; livelihoods and productive sectors; education and culture; health; social protection; infrastructure; and water), the Authority's governmental functions are now sufficiently developed to allow for a functioning State government.[48]

III. Occupied Syrian Golan

82. The Syrian Golan was occupied by Israel during the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict. In 1981, Israel passed the Golan Heights Law, which extended Israeli law and administration and thus annexed the entire Israeli-controlled territory of Golan (see A/65/327, para. 81). The Security Council, in its resolution 497 (1981), declared that the Israeli decision to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration in the Syrian Golan was null and void.

83. The occupied area of the Golan covers about 1,200 km^2. An estimated 22,000 Syrians still reside there, in five towns. The occupied Syrian Golan also has about 19,000 Israeli settlers, who live in some 33 settlements.[49]

84. Occupation and the closed crossing into the Syrian Arab Republic constitute the most important barriers to economic development and the normalization of the social fabric in the occupied Syrian Golan. Syrian citizens who wish to maintain their Syrian Arab identity face hardship and severely restricted prospects of earning a decent living.[50]

85. Agriculture remains the main source of income for most Syrian families. According to the Syrian Government, there is discrimination against Syrian workers and landowners in the occupied Syrian Golan. This discrimination takes the form of denial of jobs as a result of not having served in the Israeli army, as well as restrictions on the use of water, especially for irrigation, and high taxation. Taxation on the agricultural produce of the occupied population can be as high as 50 per cent. Another impediment to agricultural production was reportedly the uprooting of trees and destruction of crops. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic and witnesses reported several instances of uprooting of trees and burning of land in May 2010.[50]

86. A dispute broke out in the town of Majdal Shams when land was said to have been confiscated to allow for the expansion of the Nimrod settlement in the summer of 2009. Another incident occurred in 2010, when farmers reported that between 70 and 80 trees per dunam had been uprooted on an area of 25 dunams.[50]

[48] Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Process, "Palestinian State-building: a decisive period" (13 April 2011). Available from http://unispal.un.org/pdfs/AHLC-Apr2011_UNSCOrpt.pdf.

[49] International Committee of the Red Cross, "Occupied Golan: nurturing ties with the rest of Syria", 15 February 2011. Available from www.icrc.org/eng/resources/documents/update/2011/golan-update-2011-02-15.htm.

[50] International Labour Organization, "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" (2010). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_130550.pdf.

87. Israeli settlers farm 80 km^2 of land, including large patches of agricultural land. Syrians farm about 20 km^2 of land. The water allocated for use by Arabs is subject to strict controls, with disparities between the water allotted to Israeli settlers and Syrian residents. The diversion of water resources to Israeli settlements has resulted in the drying up of springs supplying water to Arab villages in the occupied Golan, adversely affecting crops and livelihoods.[51]

88. Late in 2009, the Syrian Arab Republic expressed concern at the solicitation by Israel of competitive bids in relation to the sale of 11 residential buildings in the village of Ain Qunyah in the occupied Syrian Golan (see A/65/327, para. 86). Israeli authorities continue to encourage settler population growth. For example, on 10 February 2010, the Knesset voted in favour of a bill to grant tax breaks to settlers living in the Golan Heights.[52]

89. In 2010, the International Labour Organization noted few local employment opportunities, particularly for university graduates and other young people seeking professional posts (see A/65/327, para. 90).

90. As at 27 August 2010, approximately seven prisoners from the occupied Syrian Golan were detained in Israeli prisons, one of whom had spent some 25 years in detention. Detainees were reported to be suffering from inadequate medical care in conditions that may not meet the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners (see A/65/327, para. 91).

91. United Nations human rights mechanisms and agencies, as well as other relevant organizations, lack access to the occupied Syrian Golan. Furthermore, local non-governmental organizations and individuals operating in the occupied Golan have expressed difficulties with access to information, for example obtaining official figures on water consumption, due to a lack of cooperation by Israel and Israeli settlers (see A/65/327, para. 94).

92. The International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC), however, remains active in the occupied Syrian Golan. In 2010, ICRC arranged for the passage of 262 students and 666 pilgrims from the occupied Golan to the Syrian Arab Republic and transferred more than 8,000 tons of apples across the demarcation line separating the occupied Syrian Golan from the rest of the Republic.[49]

93. To support its citizens in the occupied Golan, the Syrian Government has enacted new legislation granting the continued payment of wages to Syrian citizens who have been dismissed from employment by the Israeli authorities. The legislation is to assist nationals in retaining their Syrian national identity and ties to the homeland (Legislative Decree No. 17 of 14 February 2010).[50]

[51] Report of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food on his mission to Syria from 29 August to 7 September 2010. Available from www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/food/docs/SyriaMissionPreliminaryConclusions_07092010.pdf.

[52] Foundation for Middle East Peace, *Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories*, vol. 20, No. 4 (July-August), p. 4. Available from www.fmep.org/reports/archive/vol.-20/no.-4/PDF.

IV. Conclusion

94. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory and the Syrian Golan continued to exacerbate economic and social hardship among the populations under occupation during 2010.

95. Illegal settlements and outposts continue to expand, the issues of settler violence against Palestinians and of adequately enforcing the law on settlers remain a very serious concern, Palestinian access to water remains inadequate, the environment continues to become degraded, poverty levels remain high, unemployment continues to be endemic despite some growth in GDP and health indicators continue to deteriorate.

96. There has been a limited easing of the Israeli blockade on the Gaza Strip, but essential supplies for reconstruction remain prohibited, truck traffic remains at a fraction of its pre-blockade levels and the movement of people remains tightly restricted.

97. Attacks by Palestinian factions on Israeli cities and towns have continued to inflict civilian casualties. Israel continues to violate international law, including by causing the death of and injury to Palestinian civilians, detaining thousands of Palestinians, including children, continuing to construct settlements and the wall and imposing a blockade on the Gaza Strip.

98. In his message to the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace on 29 March 2011, the Secretary-General said that all expressions of violence must stop, and their perpetrators brought to justice. He also said that the occupation that began in 1967 must end. He stressed that the Palestinians have a legitimate right to the establishment of an independent and viable State of their own, and that Israel has the right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized and secure borders. Pointing to the urgency of realizing a two-State solution, he said that serious efforts should be exerted to bring the parties back to the negotiating table as soon as possible, based on existing agreements between the parties, the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map and the Arab Peace Initiative.[53]

99. The United Nations will continue to work towards the realization of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on international law and all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, to put an end to the occupation that began in 1967 and to establish a sovereign, democratic, viable and contiguous Palestinian State existing peacefully side-by-side with a secure Israel.

[53] The full text of the message of the Secretary-General is available from www.un.org/apps/sg/sgstats.asp?nid=5173.